

VIRGINIA RAPID RESPONSE FACT SHEET

State Dislocated Worker Unit (DWU)
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Program Description

The State Dislocated Worker Unit (DWU) receives notices of plant closures and mass layoffs, including those covered under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act. Please click on the link at the U.S. Department of Labor's website at www.doleta.gov/layoff/employers.cfm for more information on the WARN Act and Rapid Response Services for employers.

When the DWU obtains information about a major layoff, it can respond with on-site services to assist workers facing job losses. Rapid Response provides early intervention assistance designed to transition workers to their next employment as soon as possible. While the Rapid Response Program is administered at the state level, it is planned and implemented at the local level through a combined team effort.

The more quickly Rapid Response is begun, the more time is available for workers to overcome their fears and begin their re-entry into the workforce. Early intervention allows employers and workers to communicate about worker concerns, to take advantage of worker transition committee opportunities, to initiate peer worker projects, and to identify, design and oversee layoff aversion and incumbent worker strategies.

Program Eligibility

Rapid Response services are available in layoffs which involve twenty-five (25) or more workers and plant closings or mass layoffs which affect fewer than twenty-five (25) employees, but occur in a business or industry which forms the economic base of a small community (population 50,000 or less). Workers affected by layoffs of under 25 individuals, which do not receive Rapid Response services through the State, may access WIA services directly through their local Workforce Investment Board (WIB).

Information Briefings

A Workforce Services Consultant is stationed in each of the state's major regions and works directly with company representatives and with employees to design and deliver employment transition services before the actual layoff date. Their responsibilities include meeting with the Employer to get more information about reduction in force plans, provide an overview of service options and to customize services according to workforce needs.

The focus of the first meeting with the workers who will be dislocated is to give the employees information about:

1. How the Rapid Response Process works and how it can help them get more information about job opportunities; (provided by the Virginia Employment Commission)
2. Unemployment Insurance guidelines and benefits; (provided by the Virginia Employment Commission)
3. Training opportunities under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
4. Resources available in the community.

The major goal is to develop a working relationship with the employees and encourage their participation in the programs and services offered.

Workforce Transition Team

A company facing a reduction in force may establish a committee to facilitate transition services for the affected employees. The teams often include representatives from the human resources, training, and employee assistance departments; managers/supervisors; union stewards; and the employees. The Virginia Community College System (VCCS), Workforce Services Consultant is available to serve as an active member of this team and will work with the group to plan services that meet the needs of the affected workers.

Core Services Available

Based on the results of a Rapid Response Needs Assessment Survey of each employee, Core Services can be provided in groups. A survey of the workforce needs and concerns will help to ensure that the services provided are of value and importance to the group. Rapid Response may provide the following services in a group format:

- Job Search Assistance may include accessing community resources, job application and resume preparation, assessing accomplishments and skills, resume development lab, interviewing skills, effective interviewing techniques, practice interviewing lab and coping with job loss. These services are available through Rapid Response in a group format.
- Assistance is provided in coordinating the mass filing of Unemployment Insurance claims and the registration for Job Services.

- Labor Market Information will be furnished to all registrants, including Emerging and Demand Occupations. Job Postings will also be made available through multimedia and technology.
- Group Stress Management Seminars shall be made available on a regular and/or as needed basis. The focus of these seminars will be to develop strategies for managing the stress associated with job loss, its impact on the family unit and on maintaining community relationships.
- Group Financial Management Seminars primarily focus on assisting affected workers in developing financial planning skills in order to maintain household and consumer finances. A specific focus will be on negotiating manageable payment schedules with mortgage, finance and various lending institutions.
- Assistance with setting up an on-site Resource Center. We have a Transition Library that we can bring to your location and allow your employees to use in their research. Consultation is provided regarding additional resources for the center.

Layoff Aversion

Layoffs may be averted through the use of strategies that help retain or save jobs. The aim of the aversion could be to help the company make changes so that layoffs are reduced or completely avoided. As a viable partner with other programs and organizations within the Workforce and Economic Development communities, the Rapid Response Team has access to layoff aversion options that may be utilized in a layoff aversion plan.

Service Delivery Structure

Virginia is divided into 17 Workforce Investment Areas. Rapid Response is administered at the state level, but operated at the local level. Persons seeking services can contact their local Virginia Workforce Network office. Rapid Response services offered to any company and its employees are tailored, based on the needs of the affected employees, and are at no cost to the employer or the affected workers. For more information about the 17 local Workforce Investment Areas, please log onto the VCCS website at <http://www.vwn.virginia.gov> and click on “Local Workforce Investment Boards”.

DWU STAFF

In addition to the State DWU Manager, Willie Blanton (wblanton@vccs.edu), there are Workforce Services Consultants strategically located across the state to provide on-site consultation and coordination of Rapid Response activities and services:

Eastern Region: Curtis Wray (cwrap@vccs.edu)
Opportunity Inc. Local One Stop
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Central Region: Felecia McClenny (fmcClenny@vccs.edu)
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Western Region: Clarence Hughes (chughes@vccs.edu)
New River Community College
Workforce Technology
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Northern Region: Gregory Vaughn (gvaughn@vccs.edu)
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DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is the federal legislation that funds a large majority of the nation's employment and training-related programs. These programs are available at no additional expense to employers and workers. In Virginia, the Virginia Community College (VCCS) administers the Workforce Investment Act. Services are provided through local Virginia Workforce Network Centers overseen by Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBS).

WIA offers unique programs for persons who have lost their jobs in mass layoffs or plant closings, or who have been laid off and are unlikely to return to their jobs.

The regular Dislocated Worker Program under WIA offers employment and training programs for eligible workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own or have received official notice of a layoff. This program allows for individualized re-employment services.

For more information about dislocated worker programs and services, visit the U.S. Department of Labor's website at www.doleta.gov/layoff/workers.cfm